



M. J. ELECTRIC, LLC

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July 2, 2009

The Honorable Jeff Mayes
Chairman, House Energy and Technology Committee
Room 1285 House Office Building
Lansing, MI 48909

Re: House Bill No. 4999

Dear Representative Mayes:

As a representative of M. J. ELECTRIC, LLC, I am concerned about Michigan's "Frost Law" and its negative impact on utility subcontractors. Michigan's Frost Law takes effect during the months of March, April and May each year. During these months, weight limits on certain county roads are generally reduced by 35%. This weight limit reduction presents special problems for my company. Many of our utility repair and maintenance vehicles are not able to meet this reduced weight limit; however, the need for reliable and efficient utility service does not end during those months.

Michigan's Frost Law only partially accommodates itself to the important needs of its citizens and businesses for reliable and efficient utility service. Michigan's utilities and their subcontractors are able to use county roads under Michigan's unreduced weight limits to respond to emergencies. However during these three months when the Frost Laws are in effect, utilities, **but not their subcontractors**, may obtain permits for their vehicles to use county roads for non-emergency utility work such as trenching for underground electric and gas service and tree trimming to protect against outages in preparation for spring storms. Subcontractors do much of this non-emergency work. Denying utility subcontractors the same ability to obtain permits to use county roads degrades utility industry efforts to operate reliably and efficiently.

We are a company that provides emergency and non-emergency services to the utility industry. We perform these services in Michigan for ITC Transmission (ITC), Michigan Electric Transmission Company (METC), American Transmission Company (ATC), Upper Peninsula Power Company (UPPCO), WE Energies (WE) and several of the utilities associated with the Michigan Municipal Electric Association. Additionally, we perform subcontract services for utilities throughout the continental United States. We are headquartered in Iron Mountain, Michigan, with one of our branch offices in Troy, Michigan.

We have been in this business for 50 years as a union contractor; the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) generally represents our employees. We carry substantial commercial general liability insurance to ensure we are well covered for the many risks associated with our business. We currently employ 922 individuals, of which, 284 are Michigan taxpayers.

We believe Michigan's current law, which allows utilities permitted use of county roads during March, April and May, is a necessary balance between the interests of providing reliable and efficient utility service and maintaining the roads. We are doing the same work as utilities and that work should be accorded the same privileges and responsibilities whether performed by a utility or its subcontractor.

I ask for your support of House Bill No. 4999 to address this issue. HB 4999 would simply allow utility subcontractors to use county roads during the months of March, April and May under the same rules and procedures that apply to the utilities that employ them.

Thank you for introducing HB No. 4999. We appreciate your support. Please call me if you have any questions. I can be reached at (906) 776-4557.

Very truly yours,

M. J. ELECTRIC, LLC

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Edward E. Farrington".

Edward E. Farrington
Senior Vice President
Utility Division

EF/sm

cc: ITC Contract File
ATC Contract File